

# City’s Worst Playgrounds Get Dream Makeovers

Neighborhood Activists Rejuvenate Franklin Square and Dolores Park

By Lori Higa

Bounded by 16th, 17th, Bryant and Hampshire streets, Franklin Square is located at the outer edges of the Mission and Potrero Hill. Well-used by soccer teams from outside the neighborhood, the park is rarely visited by nearby residents, save the occasional dog walker. Once a shining example of Victorian-era design, complete with an athletic field and meandering pathways, the 4.4 acre park is dilapidated and dangerous; a magnet for the homeless, drug use and prostitution. The park’s metal play structure is corroded, its pressure-treated wood pillars rotted and leeching arsenic, and its sandbox polluted with feces, syringes, condoms and cigarette butts. Two years ago, the Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC), a local nonprofit dedicated to revitalizing city parks and green spaces, declared Franklin Square San Francisco’s worst, giving it a grade “F.”



Neighborhood activist Richard Newhagen (far left) and his family enjoy a sunny day at Dolores Park.

Antje Kann and David Maltz didn’t need NPC to tell them what they could see with their own eyes. Even though they live just two blocks from Franklin Square, the young couple, who at the time had one child, Amelie, now three and a half, and another on the way, Marlon, now nearly two, never went to the park because “it was atrocious and unappealing.” Instead, they traveled south to play at Jackson Park playground and McKinley

Square, which they found family-friendly and safe.

Three years ago the couple attended an event at Franklin Square, organized by neighborhood activist Ariel Braunstein, and helped create Friends of Franklin Square (FoFS). Their goal is to make the park safe for families and locals to enjoy. Kann, a software consultant from Germany and her husband, David, a medical products development manager,

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# Mom Helps Connect Potrero Hill Parents

By Lori Higa

Natalie Freeburg felt she’d come home when she first arrived in San Francisco almost two decades ago. A self-described “ex-pat child of an oil company family,” Freeburg was born in Venezuela and raised in Iran, Libya and England. She came to the City after graduating college, first living in the Richmond District before moving to Potrero Hill in 2001. The Mississippi Street resident’s unconventional upbringing shaped her values regarding community, partnership and parenting. And they’re what inspired her to rejuvenate the Potrero Hill Parents Association (PHPA), growing it from a few dozen members to nearly 500 people over the past five years.

Freeburg credits her success at community building to her parents’ insistence on living among the native peoples in the countries in which she was raised. “When we were overseas, my parents made sure we lived in a neighborhood rather than a company compound. That helped foster relationships with locals and allowed us to experience their cultures deeper than many ex-pat families ever could,” said Freeburg. “I started community building when I was a high school senior at the American School in London. I launched an orientation group with a couple friends, making sure new students had someone to sit with at lunch and to go out with on weekend nights.”

Freeburg, who was an associate producer for the award-winning Public Broadcasting System television show *Gerbert* in the late 1980s, serves as a consultant with First 5 San Francisco, a nonprofit that advocates and provides educational support for families with children under five years old. She recently completed a year-long training with Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network, a nonprofit dedicated to creating

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# City’s Only Public Boat Ramp Launched



Photo courtesy of Judy West.

By Casey Madden

A beautiful Saturday afternoon in mid-June marked the opening of San Francisco’s only public boat ramp at Pier 52 in Mission Bay. Mayor Gavin Newsom, San Francisco Fire Department Assistant Deputy Chief Brendan O’Leary, and other dignitaries were on hand to celebrate the increased bay access. The new




ramp features handicap access and a more gradual decline to the water, making it easier for boaters to get in and out of the bay at varying tide levels. The ramp took roughly fifteen years to complete, and cost \$3.5 million, with funding provided by the California Department of Boating and Waterways, Port of San Francisco, and California Coastal Conservancy.

At the opening Corinne Woods, a Bay View Boat Club member, was honored for her hard work and dedication to the Pier 52 project. Woods, in turn, thanked Boat Club member Betty Boatright, now deceased, who was one of the ramp’s original planners and advocates. “When we see boats from

the Bay View Boat Club struggling to get up and down that old, horrible ramp, and know that the bay is the most underutilized recreational opportunity in all of San Francisco, all I can say is thank you, thank you thank you,” said Woods.

After the ribbon cutting, guests were free to explore the ramp, chat with police and fire department officials, and enjoy food provided by the Bay View Boat Club and Mariposa Hunters Point Yacht Club. Boat rides and rowing lessons were offered by the Embarcadero Rowing Club, ITC Rowing and the San Francisco Port Authority. Curtis Lawson’s “All Star Band,” featuring Billy Dunn, Donnie Kountz, and Steve Gannon, played

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# Publisher's View Press Attacked!

By Steven J. Moss

Last month hundreds of copies of the *View* were stolen from boxes located throughout Southeast San Francisco. The theft was likely perpetrated by illegal recyclers, who can make roughly five dollars for every box-load they steal. There's some irony in larceny that focuses on grabbing stacks of a newspaper that are freely given away, and sympathy can be extended to small-time operators trying to scratch-out a living in tough times. But what's being stolen is more than newsprint: it's a community's right to read their neighborhood newspaper.

Media is in the process of radical transformation. It's quite likely that before too long the daily morning newspaper will disappear, replaced by a combination of streaming text messages, Internet videos, and cable channels. Many of us already get our news through listservs, specialty websites, and public radio stations. Whether we mourn the loss of our daily will depend on our attachment to the visceral experience of turning a flimsy paper page, as well as the quality of what replaces this experience.

Regardless of what the future looks like, right now the *View* provides an essential service to our community. As the City's longest-

running neighborhood newspaper, it reflects our village's character: independent, strong-willed, and passionate about the value of locally-owned businesses, keeping politicians honest, good public schools, and knowing one's neighbor. It's hard to imagine Potrero Hill without its own newspaper; certainly the vision is a saddening one.

In the face of these thefts, and a community that's struggling against the tide of corporate takeovers of our shops and buildings, the *View* needs your help. If you're a regular reader please consider subscribing; the best way to ensure that every copy of the paper is delivered to a set of eyes waiting to read it is through individual delivery. And let us know if you see someone taking excessive amounts of papers from our boxes. If you're a business, let us know whether we might be able to distribute the *View* at your location. And consider advertising, particularly in the September issue, which we plan to mail to more than 14,000 homes located in the 94107 zip code. And if you're the person who stole our newspapers, cut it out! Stealing newspaper is like stealing democracy. It ain't worth the five bucks.

## Clarification and Corrections

In response to gracious community feedback the *View* would like to clarify two important elements raised in last month's story, "Hill Women Help Create Stronger Community." The article states that Ruth Passen "helped start *Hills & Dales*." In fact, Passen didn't start the *View*'s predecessor, though she was instrumental in transforming the mimeographed bulletin into a professionally printed newspaper. Likewise, the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House, known as

the Nabe, was founded in the early part of the 20th century by an activist women's group of the Presbyterian Church. Enola Maxwell was an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church, and it was partially due to that connection that she was able to become the Nabe's first African-American and female director.

Also please note that the correct web address to find a copy of the University of California, Mission Bay's Community Task Force's final report is [www.community.ucsf.edu](http://www.community.ucsf.edu).

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

The suggestion, which has been mentioned in several issues of the *View*, that 16th Street be designated as a university-oriented zone, focusing on student housing and services, should be given more thought before taking any action. Housing for students is a "come and go" situation. Students don't stay long enough to have an interest in the neighborhood. College students changed the atmosphere of Berkeley and Santa Cruz with their life style.

With the best weather in town, Potrero Hill is ideal for a family-oriented community, with plenty of open space not shaded by high rises. Potrero Hill has more than its share of subsidized housing; other neighborhoods should do their share.

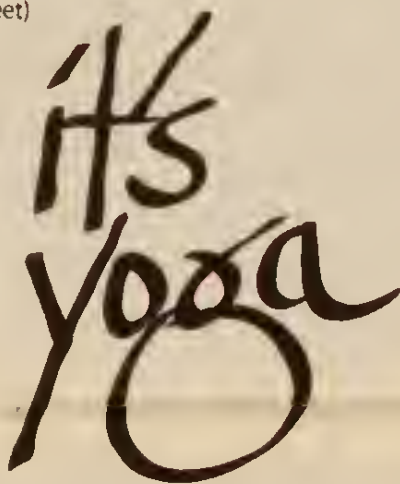
It would be a mistake to form a college area, while our elementary and middle schools go lacking. A community the size of Potrero Hill should have schools for all age groups: pre-schools, elementary, middle, high school, college, and adult education. Potrero has the buildings, but the City chooses to use them for students from other areas.

I have seen what the medical profession has done to Parnassus Heights and I would not like to see it happen on Potrero Hill. Some of you many have forgotten the destruction college students can cause when they do not get their own way.

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**EDITOR and PUBLISHER:** Steven J. Moss  
**Production Manager:** Adam Kimball  
**July STAFF:**  
Stacey Bartlett, Debbie Findling, Kerry Fleisher, Heather Tirado Gilligan, Lori Higa, Abigail Johnston, David Matsuda, Sara Moss, Shannon Schafer, Kristen A. Smith, Elias Stahl, Lisa Tehrani, Rebecca Wilkowski

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Address all correspondence to **THE POTRERO VIEW**  
2325 Third Street Suite 344, San Francisco, CA 94107  
Telephone: 415.626.8723

E-mail: [editor@potreroview.net](mailto:editor@potreroview.net) • [graphics@potreroview.net](mailto:graphics@potreroview.net) (advertising)

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**Muni versus Muni**

A T-Third Street light rail train rear-ended an N-Judah train last month outside AT&T Park on King Street, injuring 16 people, a dozen of whom were sent to the hospital. The crash disrupted light rail service along the lines for roughly two and a half hours. The N-Judah operator had just a years worth of work experience. The T-Third Street operator has been driving since 2004, but may have been speeding and talking on a cell phone when the accident occurred. Both drivers were tested for drugs and alcohol and placed on leave. Hang on to those straps!

**Cheez it, the Cops!**

The **San Francisco Department of Real Estate** is continuing with plans to site the **San Francisco Police Department's** tactical, motorcycle, bomb, and homeland security units at the old Jamba Juice and Sports Basement buildings on 17th Street. The units are currently housed in Hunters Point, but are being bounced due to ongoing efforts to detoxify the former shipyard. Some Hill residents and merchants welcome the bulked-up police presence, particularly in the wake of a spike in crimes in the neighborhood over the past three months. Others have long eyed the buildings as possible anchors for a

rejuvenated and more pedestrian-friendly commercial strip that would serve the nearby colleges. And at a proposed lease rate of three dollars per square foot the City would be paying one-third more for the space than going commercial rents. With freeways to the east and west and decaying public housing to the south, a block-long, ordinance-laden police fortress would complete the government-constructed wall encircling the community. Still, it's not a done deal: the proposal will need to be approved by the **San Francisco Board of Supervisors**. Let them know what you think.

**Power Play**

Capping a half decade-long effort to site City-owned generation in Dogpatch as way to close the half century-old Potrero Power Plant, last month the **California Independent System Operator** (Cal-ISO) officially opined that the plant's biggest unit could be closed once the Trans Bay Cable is operational. Cal-ISO also stated that the City no longer needed to site one of its four combustion turbines (CTs) at the airport, and signaled that the Potrero Power Plant's three back-up diesel units could be cleaned-up and converted to

# Short Cuts

natural gas in lieu of constructing the other three CTs. Although the **San Francisco Board of Supervisors** will decide how best to proceed later this month, the missive almost certainly kills the City-owned power plan. It isn't over yet, though: public power advocates and developers eyeing the **Mirant** parcel want the entire plant closed and replaced by City-owned generation. And community advocates, such as Dogpatch-based **San Francisco Community Power**, continue to insist that with energy management programs and existing small-scale generation the City has plenty of power without any large centralized generating stations.

**Potty Mouth**

Speaking of **San Francisco Community Power**, the nonprofit is managing a **San Francisco Public Utility Commission**-funded program to install high-quality uber-efficient toilets for free. If you're a small business, nonprofit organization, or low-income resident and have a toilet that's at least two decades old you may qualify for a complementary high efficiency model. Swapping water wasting toilets with water wise ones can reduce water bills by hundreds of dollars a year, and save precious water during the current drought. Check-out [www.sfpower.org](http://www.sfpower.org).

**Rats!**

And while we're talking toilets, the **Potrero Hill Parent's Association** listserv was rattled last month when a Hill family called for assistance with a rat problem. The furry creature crawled up a sewer pipe and

into the toilet, where he was found scrambling to get out. Not wanting to risk getting bitten, the family slammed the toilet lid shut, and was subjected to the squeals of scared rat, which was probably slightly less irritating than Kenny Chesney's music (see below). The next day the rat had disappeared, crawling back from whence he came.

**How Forever Feels**

**Academy of Country Music** Entertainer of the Year Kenny Chesney rocked more than AT&T Park at his six hour long concert last month. Inside the park drunken fans and clogged toilets drove concertgoers to abandon the show before it was over. Outside, the vocalist's sounds reverberated throughout Potrero Hill up until almost midnight. And at a nearby BART station an out-of-town police officer and fire fighter, both concert attendees, got into a brawl. The Entertainment Commission promises to look into the noise situation.

**What Housing Slump?**

Earlier this year what may be the most expensive house on the Hill sold for more than \$3 million in just eight days. The roughly 3,500 square feet Carolina Street property, which sprawls across three lots, has Golden Gate Bridge and Bay views, and features five bedrooms, and three and a half baths. The rich, it appears, still have money, even while the rest of us limit our luxuries to an expensive cup of joe.

**PREFund Prevails**

The **San Francisco Board of Education** presented the **Potrero Residents Education Fund** (PREFund) with a formal commendation for the nonprofit's contributions to **Daniel Webster Elementary School**. School board members expressed their gratitude for PREFund's work, and encouraged them to continue to fight the good fight. With a preschool opening on the campus this fall, and a Spanish immersion program scheduled to launch next year, perhaps we're about to see the re-birth of one of the City's neediest elementary schools.

**Checks and Balances**

In addition to insurance scams (see last month's "Short Cuts"), banks are holding onto their customers' money longer. Even well-backed checks – from the State of California, for example – are being held by the likes of **Washington Mutual Bank** for a week or longer. The freeze on cash provides the banks with an extra few days of interest, which, when you're talking millions of dollars, adds up. Let our money go!

**It's Natural**

The *View* is looking for an urban ecologist to help write articles and columns about local flora and fauna. Little pay, but a great opportunity to provide environmental education to a needy community. Contact [editor@potreroview.net](mailto:editor@potreroview.net) if you're interested.

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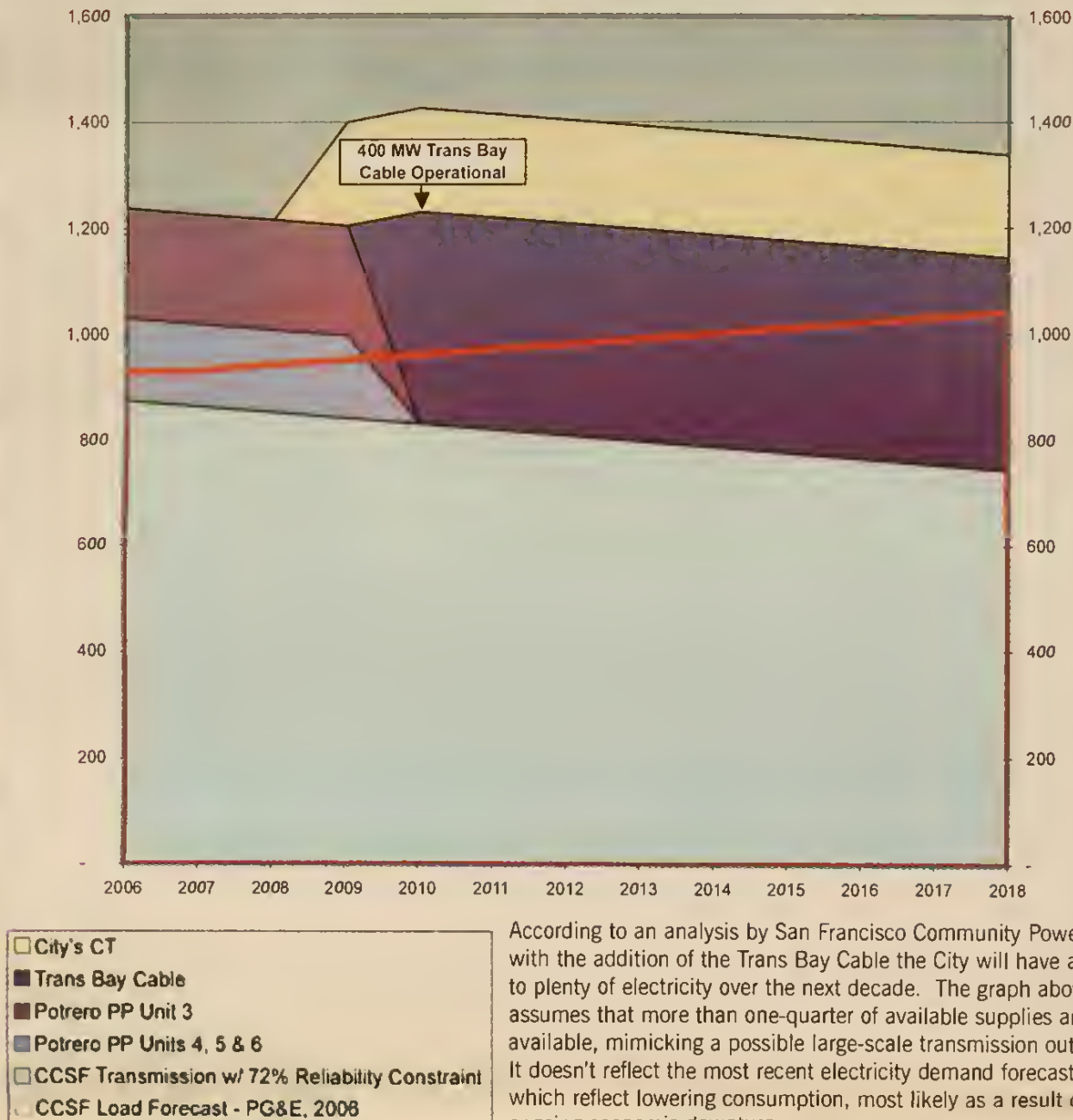
Address all correspondence to:

THE POTRERO VIEW  
 2325 3rd St. Suite 344  
 San Francisco, CA 94107  
 Telephone: (415) 626-8723  
 Fax: (415) 626-8746

Editorial E-Mail: [editor@potreroview.net](mailto:editor@potreroview.net)  
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## San Francisco has Ample Electricity Supplies for the Next Decade



According to an analysis by San Francisco Community Power, with the addition of the Trans Bay Cable the City will have access to plenty of electricity over the next decade. The graph above assumes that more than one-quarter of available supplies aren't available, mimicking a possible large-scale transmission outage. It doesn't reflect the most recent electricity demand forecasts, which reflect lowering consumption, most likely as a result of the ongoing economic downturn.



U.S. House of Representative Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Potrero Hill-based San Francisco Food Bank in late-May. With a quarter of San Francisco's children at risk of hunger, the Food Bank serves 124,000 people a year, effectively providing 66,000 meals daily. Photo by Rebecca Wilkowski.

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## San Francisco's Sewer System in Line for a Make-Over

By Alex Lantsberg

This year almost 20 inches of rain will fall on San Francisco. Most of it will land on City streets, where it'll mix with road waste and flow into a 900-mile network of pipes, pumps, and treatment plants before being discharged into the bay or ocean. With clean water increasingly scarce, the San Francisco Public Utility Commission (SFPUC) is currently developing a *Sewer System Master Plan*, with the goal of creating a more environmentally just and sustainable water use system.

The planning process for the \$3.5 billion *Master Plan* began six years ago, after the San Francisco Sustainable Watersheds Alliance (SWale, formerly the Alliance for a Clean Waterfront) and other environmental groups persuaded SFPUC that it needed community participation as part of *Plan* development to win public support for the extensive investment needed to rebuild the City's wastewater infrastructure.

The draft *Plan* contains a number of innovative proposals, including

rebuilding portions of the Southeast Treatment Plant – which processes 80 percent of the City's sewage – reducing sewer discharges into the Bay and the Pacific Ocean by nearly half through plumbing changes and "green infrastructure" projects such as vegetated swales, permeable pavement, stormwater harvesting, and green roofs; and implementing a stormwater treatment and retention program that will retain and reuse rain water.

While many of the proposals, which were prompted by years of community effort, reflect good progress towards a most sustainable future, more needs to be done. For example, environmental advocates are calling for inclusion of measurable goals for the green-infrastructure program; more wetlands and habitat restoration; and a stronger commitment to water recycling.

Over the next year the SFPUC will hold a series of hearings and outreach meetings to further refine the *Plan*. For more information visit [www.sfsewers.org](http://www.sfsewers.org), or sign-up for the SWale action alert list: [alex@sfsuale.org](mailto:alex@sfsuale.org).

## Do-It-Yourself Wine Making



Photo courtesy of Crushpad.

By Elias Stahl

People who love wine to such a degree that they want to create their own, and even casual wine lovers, will want to visit Crushpad. Located in Dogpatch, Crushpad is a bustling warehouse in which wine is made, from the collecting and destemming of the grapes to the labeling and packaging of the finished bottles. There's no reason to have a winery in the middle of an expensive urban area except to allow wine lovers to come by and make a bottle, or three hundred, for themselves. Crushpad is a do-it-yourself wine maker, willing to provide as much help as you'd like in the process of making your own wine. Hayden Moulds, CrushPad's Marketing Manager, explained that

resulting wine can be aged anywhere from eight months to two years.

After the wine has been aged in oak barrels to your preference, it's bottled, corked, and labeled. The end product is a finished bottle of wine, built, assembled, aged, packaged, and labeled to your specifications. Crushpad makes it possible for someone with little time, some money, and a spark of creativity or curiosity to play a hand in making their own wine.

Crushpad charges \$5,700 to \$10,900 to make a barrel, 25 cases, of wine, and customers have to make at least one barrel. However, individuals can group together to sponsor and split a barrel. And for a limited time the winery is offering "Community Crush," in which Potrero Hill residents and workers can purchase up to three bottles for \$19 a bottle, with two-thirds of the proceeds going to local nonprofits.

While Crushpad offers a high-end wine making service, for those with less resources wine can be made from scratch in your garage for significantly less money. An eight gallon batch of wine, yielding up to three cases (36 bottles of wine), can cost as little as \$150, including all equipment purchases and rentals as well as picking the hundred pounds of grapes yourself. Stores located in the East Bay and San Francisco, such as Oak Barrel Winecraft in Berkeley or Brewcraft in the Richmond District, can offer helpful advice, and sell or rent the equipment and tools necessary to make your own wine. It's a lot more work, but a lot less money, and you may take more pride in the outcome. But you have to be willing to make a few mistakes without the support of a sophisticated winemaker.

For those of a more perfectionist nature, and who desire a crisper and more professional end product, Crushpad is the right place. You can take a closer look at Crushpad at its website [www.crushpadwine.com](http://www.crushpadwine.com), or to participate in Community Crush go to [www.potreriwine.com](http://www.potreriwine.com). A great glass of your own wine is never far away; all it takes is a little daring and initiative. As Moulds put it, "Winemaking can happen anywhere."



Photo courtesy of Crushpad.

the winery's mission is to "enable wine enthusiasts to make their own luxury-class wine". Crushpad's staff of seven expert winemakers and cellar masters are available to assist amateur winemakers through the process of turning grapes into a professional bottle.

Making wine is a straight-forward process, though creating good wine is challenging. A winemaker must first select the type of wine, be it a syrah, a cabernet sauvignon, or a chardonnay, they wish to make. Crushpad offers 16 different types of grapes, red and white, which it obtains from vineyards located in California, Oregon, and Washington. The grapes are destemmed and fermented, pressed and put into barrels. You can make the chemical estimations essential in winemaking – such as the calculation of the malolactic acids and the tannins desired, which will affect your wine's body and taste – or leave it to the Crushpad staff. The

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# Potrero Hill Women's Club Celebrates its Centennial

By Anne Loskutoff

On February 10, 1908, a group of Potrero Hill women gathered to discuss ways to improve the community's quality of life. They also wanted to provide a safe haven for the many San Franciscans who had been displaced by the 1906 earthquake. On April 10th the women held their first formal meeting at the nurse's settlement - termed "Tent City" - on 19th and Iowa streets, and created the "Potrero Hill Women's Club."

That same year Henry Ford introduced the Model T, which was mass-produced and sold for \$850. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld Oregon's 10-hour workday for women, Theodore Roosevelt was President, San Francisco's population stood at 88,710, and Singer had just completed the City's first skyscraper, at 47-floors the tallest building on the peninsula.

For entertainment club members played a card game called "whist." The minutes of the Club's earliest meetings indicate notable expenses: water use cost 7 cents, gas 75 cents,

laundering and tablecloths 30 cents, entertainment and dessert (cake) 36 cents. The club corresponded with the Department of Public Works, Police Department, Municipal Car Line, and San Francisco Board of Supervisors, among others, requesting that various improvements be made to Potrero Hill. The Recreation Department was asked to build a youth center, now known as the Potrero Hill Playground and Recreation Center on Arkansas Street. The soil to create the playground and other public infrastructure was brought in by wheel barrow.

Membership dues were one dollar a year. The club donated funds to Guide Dogs for the Blind, the Salvation Army and American Red Cross, the latter of which was requested to use the monies to purchase blankets for the war relief.

In 1961 the *San Francisco Examiner* published a photograph in which many of the club members are carrying signs in front of City Hall protesting the building of Highway 101 through Potrero Hill. Today, a century later, the club continues to meet monthly, and remains active in helping to improve the Hill community.

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# Fishing For a Healthy Catch

By Shannon Schafer

In the wake of the recent ban on commercial salmon fishing off the Pacific Coast, many consumers are questioning the sustainability of eating wild fish. Salmon consumption has dramatically increased over the last decade due to greater awareness of the health benefits of fatty fish and their nutrient density. But record low salmon numbers in the Sacramento River prompted the Pacific Fishery Management Council to take action to protect the area's habitat.

Rich in Omega-3 fatty acids, high quality fish can help sustain proper brain and nervous system function, as well as the production of anti-inflammatory hormones. Recent studies have confirmed Omega-3's also have cardiovascular benefits and can help prevent heart disease. They improve blood lipids, lowering cholesterol and triglycerides, and they're essential in cell formation and visual function. The key to reaping Omega-3's benefits is finding healthy fish that are rich in these essential fatty acids, free of antibiotics, PCBs, heavy metals, and dioxins.

Wild fish are often thought to be nutritionally superior to farmed fish, principally because by feeding off of their natural habitat the fish have higher Omega-3 content. Farmed fish are often fed processed pellets made of soy, corn, and small amounts of fishmeal. The pellets don't provide as much nourishment, resulting in lower Omega-3 content. Lacking key nutrients, farmed salmon's flesh often has a grayish hue, prompting farmers to feed the fish color additives to turn their flesh into a more marketable pink. The fish are also starved for several days before they're harvested to improve their flavor and reduce their oils.

Farmed fish are often marketed as "ocean-raised fish" because of the

bad press fish farms have recently received. However, even when floating pens are placed in the ocean they're often overcrowded, accumulating feces. The fish are given antibiotics to ward off diseases and parasites, as well as drugs and hormones to enhance growth and increase reproductive behavior. There's significant danger that farmed fish will escape and taint wild stocks.

However, even wild fish pose safety concerns. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, tuna consumption exposes many Americans to mercury. The heavy metal seeps into water bodies from chlorine chemical plants, coal-fired powerplants, and auto scrap recycling. Over time it settles in oceans, lakes, and rivers, poisoning marine life's food supply. Bioaccumulation of mercury can cause neurological disorders, fetal damage, and impaired vision. Other toxic compounds, such as PCBs, dioxins, and pesticides, have been found in both wild and farmed fish. All of these chemicals have been found in the San Francisco Bay, and eating local seafood may pose health risks, according to the California Environmental Protection Agency.

A number of innovative companies are providing high quality fish, farmed and wild. Vital Choice harvests sustainable wild fish from Alaska that's tested frequently for mercury and certified by the Marine Stewardship Council. The Monterey Aquarium ([www.mbayaq.org](http://www.mbayaq.org)) provides a detailed list of fish to avoid, such as Chilean Seabass, Atlantic Cod, imported King Crab, and Pacific Roughy. There's even a Seafood Watch pocket guide that you can download that identifies the best fish choices, both farmed and wild. Alaskan wild salmon and Pacific halibut were included in the 2008 West Coast guide's Best Choice

list. Sardines are also an excellent choice because of their small size; the smaller and younger the fish, the less bioaccumulation of toxins.

There are exciting environmental breakthroughs in aquaculture too. Companies like Kona Blue Water Farms are using open ocean agriculture hatch-to-harvest monitoring systems. The company, founded by a marine biologist, uses offshore pens, at least half a mile from shore and 200 feet deep. It avoids endangered fish and only raises Kona Kampachi, a Hawaii yellowtail fish. Kona Blue Water Farms harvests only to fulfill restaurant orders from such high-end eateries as French Laundry in Napa. According to Garrett Gruener, an investor in Kona Blue, "We're taking fish native to tropical regions and creating a new species that tastes good and has zero mercury." There's

no genetic engineering, hormones, or preventative antibiotics used in the process. Similar to buying beef or chicken, this is key to a quality Omega-3 rich fish.

When purchasing fish make sure to inquire about its source, and the practices used to ensure sustainability and minimum ecological impact. Look for the Safe Harbor Certification, which ensures low mercury levels, with a stricter standard than the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's one part per million. The Marine Stewardship Council ([www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org)) also has a certification that guarantees the fish was harvested based on responsible practices and the product is not over fished. The stamp can be found on products like Whole Foods' Whole Catch Wild Alaskan Salmon.

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# Retired Sex Professor Makes Hill Home

By Kerry Fleisher

Perched in his lounge chair at his Potrero Hill condominium on Carolina Street, John De Cecco dissects the 2008 presidential election with the acumen of a professor in his prime. "The disadvantage of gay politics is that it functions on categories," intones the retired 83



Photo by Kerry Fleisher.

year old in a sonorous voice that once mesmerized classes of up to 800 students. "Obama, of course, transcends categories. I think that's why young people are attracted to his campaign."

De Cecco has taken to retirement easily since he left his teaching post at San Francisco State University in 2003. That's in part because the class he taught for 53 years – Variations in Human Sexuality – dealt with a media-saturated subject matter: human sexuality.

The Eliot Spitzer scandal played to a predictable tune of wife-stands-besides-fallen-husband, according to De Cecco. "Women are supposed to support the institution at all costs," he mused. On the mention of Hillary Clinton, De Cecco probes her sexuality with a twinkle in his eye.

"Her record as a straight person is not pure," he chuckled, declining to name his sources.

De Cecco has made a profession out of examining sexual dichotomies. In his wildly popular Variations in Human Sexuality class, he prompted his students to consider cheating as an "expansion of sexual options." Now, after an illustrious career pioneering the foundations of queer theory, he cites the case of former New Jersey Governor James McGreevey – who was pilloried for having a ménage à trois with his wife and former male aide – as an example of the press imperative to label individuals "gay" or "straight."

A self-professed good listener, De Cecco has conducted thousands of sexual surveys and interviews, and penned enough meditations on sexuality to fill an anthology called *The John Paul De Cecco Papers*. And after more than a half-century in the field, he has come to view the LGBTIQQ nomenclature – lesbian gay bisexual transgender intersex queer questioning – as a "clumsy" attempt to categorize what can't be pinned down in a digestible acronym.

In spite of his prodigious teaching record, De Cecco is anything but didactic on the subject of sex. "He didn't shut people down...he tried to engage them," said former student Terence Kissack, who's now the executive director of San Francisco's Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Historical Society. "He's an extraordinarily analytic, tolerant and generous person...he treated the subject with great respect."

Sex, in the personal realm, remained elusive and shrouded in mystique to De Cecco until he was 28 years old, when he had his first fully realized sexual experience. He'd spent his undergraduate years at Allegheny College and graduate years

at the University of Pennsylvania utterly bereft of sexual intercourse, closeted and lonely. After stints teaching history and educational psychology in Michigan, he packed up and shipped off to San Francisco, where he experienced a sexual awakening and eventually went into four years of psychotherapy.

In 1973, De Cecco came out of the closet in a campus publication, an unprecedented act of self-disclosure for a San Francisco State professor. For De Cecco, coming out was a no-brainer. "It was preposterous to be hiding something personally important and publicly too." Soon he became faculty advisor to the Gay Students Coalition, and later he helped found Delta Lambda Phi, the university's first gay fraternity.

He never sparked the same acts of self-disclosure amongst other closeted professors that he did with his students. In the 1970s and 80s, many closeted colleagues disassociated themselves from him, fearing stigma by proxy. Fortunately for De Cecco, the fact that many of his colleagues didn't join him in his openness didn't affect his love life. "It may be too boring for two professors to get together," he announced, a laugh rippling through his small frame.

Meanwhile, his closeted students looked up to him as a mentor. "I was probably the first teacher they ever talked to about it [being gay]." For ethical reasons De Cecco never

engaged in sexual contact with a student, in part because he felt students would feel compromised, trapped in an unfair power differential. That's not to say he wasn't tempted. "In a way I was encouraging the students to be promiscuous," said De Cecco, reflecting on the course curriculum. "It didn't take a lot."

From the 1970s forward De Cecco became a leading queer theorist and activist, founding the Center for Homosexual Education Evaluation Research (CHEER) at San Francisco State and working with million dollar grants. He was friends with politician Harvey Milk ("he very much New York") and though he never met philosopher Michel Foucault, he talks of him like brethren: "Oh, he was into leather, and definitely visited bars on Folsom street." On sex researcher Alfred Kinsey, De Cecco muses that "he was a pioneer, and yet, I think he tried to quantify what can't be quantified."

Above all, De Cecco wanted his students to break from traditional thinking and question the vast panorama of sexual expression. It was commonplace for De Cecco's students to study sadomasochism in psychological terms and frame bestiality into the historical context of agricultural societies. He sparked conversations on sexual reassignment surgery before transexuality was a leading topic amongst queer activists.

Outside the classroom, De Cecco has written extensively on aging

*Continued on Page 16*

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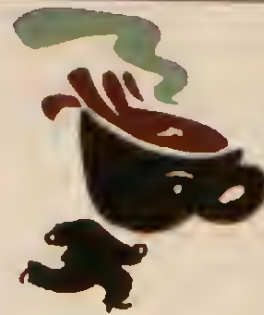


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# Omega Boys Club Offers a Cure for Violence

By Kristin A. Smith

Teenagers from around the Bay Area come to Dogpatch-based Omega Boys Club to get a second chance at an education. But while the nonprofit is housed in a San Francisco Unified School District building, Omega is not your typical school. "What happens in here does not look like what happens in another classroom," said Deborah Estell, Omega's Coordinator. "What happens here is magic."

The magic to which Estell refers consists of the Omega Leadership Academy, a comprehensive program that includes a non-violence curriculum, academic courses and a college scholarship fund.

Founded by Joseph E. Marshall, a former middle school administrator with a doctorate in psychology, and Jack Jacqua, a school counselor, the Omega Boys Club's goal is to keep kids "alive and free from violence" so they can "build positive lives and move into contributing roles in society." Marshall and Jacqua believe that whether students are directly involved in gangs or just surrounded by disruptive behavior, urban violence prevents them from reaching their academic potential. According to Jack Soares, Omega's Communications Director, Omega "aims to give back to kids the education they lost to violence."

Contrary to its name, Omega serves both boys and girl. Students take evening courses in math and

literature, which are designed to help them graduate from high school or obtain their General Education Degree (GED). Omega serves 300 students annually; in its two decade-plus years of operation, every student who's completed the Leadership Academy has received their diploma or GED.

The Omega Scholarship Fund provides financial support to enable low-income students to attend college. "Many of these kids are the first in their families to graduate from high school, let alone college," said Soares.

Amanda Jones, 20, is one of the students who benefited from an Omega scholarship. Growing up in West Oakland, Jones used drugs, engaged in violent behavior, and was surrounded by friends that she said "were going nowhere." Jones was smart but didn't see college in her future. "I just didn't have any confidence in myself to succeed," she said. "I figured I was doomed." But she wasn't; Jones just finished her first year at Tennessee State University with a 3.2 grade point average.

In addition to academic courses, Academy students participate in "family meetings" that provide a safe space for them to grapple with complex personal issues. Students are taught how to become civic leaders, and provided with ways to incorporate non-violence into their daily lives. Rather than seeing

violence as a social problem, Omega treats the problem as a virus that overtakes an individual. "We think of violence as a disease," said Soares. "And there's a cure for that disease." Omega's cure for violence is the Alive and Free Violence Prevention program, which is taught both within the Academy and through training workshops designed for educators.

Participants learn the risk factors for contracting the violence virus, and ways to purge the infection from their system. The program teaches new ways of living based on respect and authentic relationships. In its 21-year history only one student who's completed the program has died of violence, and in that case it was self-inflicted. "It works," said Soares.

If Omega Boys Club had a poster child, it'd be Andre Aikins. Aikins grew up in Oakland and found himself entangled in the world of gangs and violence. His tough attitude and disinterest in education got him kicked out of numerous public schools. But his life changed when he met Marshall at a high school assembly. Aikins was skeptical but intrigued by Marshall's refrain of "If you knew what I knew, you wouldn't do what you do." Aikins confronted Marshall after the assembly and demanded to know what he meant.

Marshall said he'd show him, and brought Aikins to Omega.

Shortly after, Aikins became a regular participant, and with the help of the Academy, he received his GED and attended college on an Omega scholarship. After graduating with a degree in Math Education, Aikins got a job teaching at a middle school that'd kicked him out years before, and eventually became the school's vice principal. Today Aikins is Omega's Operations Manager.

Aikins wears crisp, white sneakers and thin-framed glasses. His tattoos peek out of a tucked-in polo shirt. "I wouldn't have the life I have now if it weren't for Omega," he said. "I had to give back in the way it was given to me." Aikins isn't the only one to stay loyal to the program; two other former students also serve on the board.

What began as a refuge for Bay Area youth has turned into a worldwide network. Omega students, who without the nonprofit's intervention might never have left Northern California, are now scattered across the country, attending college and spreading the message of non-violence. Later this year, Marshall will be heading to South Africa to hand-deliver his prescription to that country's ailing school districts.

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## Goat Hill History



When Potrero Hill was first nicknamed Goat Hill is anybody's guess. It could've been in the 18th century, when the Hill was pastureland for Mission Dolores. Or in the 19th, when many of the Hill's working-class families kept the odd goat, cow, or chicken flock in their yards. Or it could have been in the mid-20th century, when Mrs. Estelle West of Utah Street became known as the Goat Lady of Potrero Hill. In 1951, as Mrs. West's herd of 18 goats nibbled away on the hillside overlooking Potrero Avenue, bulldozers and steam shovels deployed by the State Division of Highways were nibbling away at that same hillside, preparing the ground for the Bayshore Freeway (aka 101). Mrs. West protested the freeway's development, and several pictures of her defending her house and herd made the pages of the now-defunct *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*. The state prevailed, of course, and Mrs. West and 17 of her goats moved elsewhere. The 18th goat, a pregnant nanny, wound up at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) on 16th Street. She's shown here, together with her four brand-new kids and SPCA officer Arthur Germaine. By 1975, when Goat Hill Pizza opened on the corner of 18th and Connecticut streets, the neighborhood's nickname had been solidly established. Goat Hilda DeAnchovy nibbled happily in the restaurant's back yard until progress once again prevailed. Hilda and her kids, Loretta and Bucky, were relocated to Sonoma County in 1985 when the restaurant expanded its dining room. While we all love the dining room, we do miss our mascot goats! – Abigail Johnston

## What's in a Street Name?

By Sarah Marloff

One of Potrero Hill's distinctive features is its street names. Streets running north-south are usually named after states, while east-west streets are typically numerical, with an occasional California county thrown-in. The county nomenclature, which used to be more dominant, was adopted in the mid-1800s, when San Francisco was known as the "Village of Yerba Buena." The naming reflected a patriotic display in a period before California became a state.

Counties became numbers after the Postal Department complained to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors' Street Names Committee in the early-1880s. The Department asserted that too many of the City's streets had duplicate names, resulting in mail delivery delays. In response, in 1882 the Board of Supervisors passed several ordinances to rid San Francisco of multiple identical street names. In addition, the Board began naming previously unmarked alleys, and changed some monikers so that they'd have a more melodic sound. The later policy prompted controversy, with some supervisors complaining that changing names caused "great trouble" and "necessitated changes in official maps and records."

Most of Potrero's streets were unaffected until the 1890s, though some streets – including "Napa" – had already been renamed. Six roads

bearing county names were assigned numbers in 1895. With Bay Street as the eastern border and Harrison Street as the western boundary, Santa Clara became 17th, Solano became 18th, and Butte became 19th. Sierra, now 22nd, and Nevada, now 23rd, were only changed as far west as Potrero Avenue. Humboldt Street, which continues to exist for a short block east of Illinois Street, escaped becoming a number when it was renamed Lowell in 1892, which later disappeared entirely.

The mania for renaming San Francisco's streets continued until 1909, with upwards of 400 roads rechristened. The 1906 earthquake damaged a large portion of the City's records, destroying most of the documentation related to the street renaming process. Another spurt of renaming occurred shortly after World War II, when private developers switched Irish and English names to more Spanish and Asian sounding titles in accordance with the San Francisco's changing ethnicity.

Today, few of Potrero's streets carry their original county name. Alameda, Mariposa, and Marin stand alone, breaking-up the flow of the numbers established under Board of Supervisor Resolution Number 2833, adopted on January 5, 1895. As a result of these stalwarts – Marin is found south of Cesar Chavez, which not so long ago was Army Street – the Hill's numbered streets are skewed, if no less beloved.

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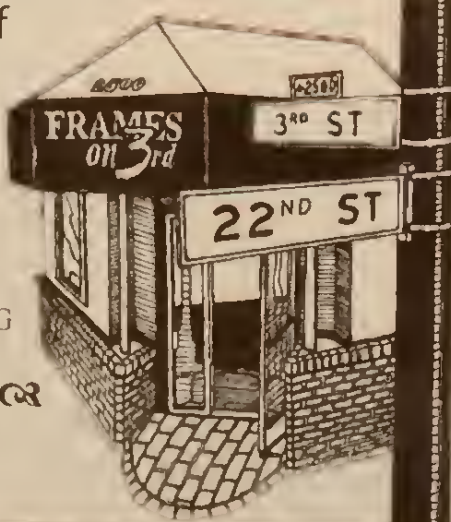
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# Going to War

By David Matsuda

As with the larger war effort – in which U.S. troops were dispatched to Iraq with what they had, not necessarily what they needed – Human Terrain Teams were sent overseas without an essential element: native Iraqi Arabic speakers who could act as interpreters. Fortunately for my team a colleague recognized that “Adam” (not his real name), one of the Iraqis in the interpreter pool, had a gift for conveying the meaning of the Iraqi-Arabic language and explaining his native culture. When my teammate rotated home Adam fell in with, as he calls me, “my Uncle Dave.”

Adam, a doctor of veterinary medicine and pharmacist technician before the war, possessed skills that went far beyond translation. Typically, Iraqi translators attempt to match Arabic word for English word, without necessarily conveying precise meaning, which in all cultures is nested within the complex relationship between words, gestures, and often subtle interpretations.

Adam taught me sheikly behavior: to be honorable, calm, a trusted friend, formidable opponent and to work to discover what’s in people’s hearts. Adam proudly introduced me as a very important advisor to the brigade commander, something I became because his fellow Iraqis believed him. He would often rephrase my questions, patiently explaining that “If I ask the question the way you have stated it my fellow Iraqis will not understand. So here according to Iraqi convention and parlance is how I will put it to them....” Adam

provided invaluable insights into complex Iraqi worldviews, and helped complete many successful negotiations and missions.

While interpreters are essential to the war effort, their role places them in a risky position. If an interpreter is Shi’a, Sunni’s may try to kill him for aiding the occupiers; and vice versa. In addition to hostility from extremist Iraqis, militia and insurgents often intimidate or murder interpreters’ relatives and close friends for offering aid to the “occupiers.”

Given Adam’s role you might think that the Coalition Forces would hold him and his fellow interpreters in high esteem. Unfortunately, in many cases they don’t. Adam and his fellow “terps” were sometimes lied to; told that if they worked hard they’d be allowed entry into the United States, which almost never happens. Interpreters were verbally abused, treated as second class citizens in their own country, and pushed to go on mission after mission without rest. The mistreatment occurred with the implied threat that if an interpreter refused a request, no matter how insignificant or demeaning, s/he would be fired.

Despite placing his life on hold, being mistreated by his allies, and putting his family at risk, Adam is committed to creating an effective and beneficial relationship between Iraqis and Coalition Forces. Now that I’m home I miss Adam’s profound friendship, worry for his safety, and look forward to the day when he will sit with me in San Francisco talking about days gone by and a future in which his life is no longer on danger.

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## Sex Professor

Continued from Page 8



Photo by Kerry Fleisher.

lesbians, sexual discrimination and male-to-male assault in prison. The *Journal of Homosexuality*, which he founded in 1977 and edits arduously to this day (though some submissions after 30 years fielding them, he admits, are “quite boring”) includes such essays as “Sadomasochism: Powerful Pleasures,” “Drag King Anthology,” and “Fag Church: Men Who Integrate Gay and Christian Identities.”

When De Cecco first moved to San Francisco in 1960, the Castro neighborhood was undergoing a transition from working-class culture to a gay nightclub scene. In later years, when the neighborhood was shifting toward an overt gay identity and gay men were starting to invest in homes around Castro Street, the AIDS epidemic hit. “It was a very sad thing to see the area depopulate,” said De Cecco.

He knew a gay doctor that tended to the enormous influx of AIDS victims in the early 1980s. “There was a need for an openly gay doctor,” he said. “It’s an irony he died of the very thing he was warning against.” De Cecco incorporated debates about AIDS into his class, enlisting a nude couple to perform a play about AIDS. When this sparked controversy amongst his colleagues, he charged ahead, recalling he “was supposed to have complete academic freedom.”

De Cecco remembers how underground leather bars, where sadomasochism was common practice,

proliferated South-of-Market in the 1960s and 70s. He knew doctors who made a living treating S&M victims, noting that their expertise in treating their patients suggested that they, too, derived pleasure from the encounter. The sadist is also an expert in a certain sense, according to De Cecco. “To provide service you have to be sensitive to the fantasy it’s woven into.”

After establishing his post at San Francisco State, De Cecco moved to Potrero Hill from the Haight “for the weather” and its convenient proximity to campus. He moved into the Victorian Mews, a housing condominium complex located between 19th and 20th streets on Carolina Street, where he remains today. The condo, based on the architectural design of the London Mews in England, had a party atmosphere in his earlier years on the Hill, and there was “always a sprinkling of gay people in the neighborhood,” according to De Cecco. De Cecco often held informal group panels on sexuality at his home on the Hill.

The laid-back, open lifestyle in the Victorian Mews contrasts starkly with De Cecco’s repressed childhood. He was born in Erie, Pennsylvania to strict Catholic-Italian parents, who never accepted his coming out. He remembers his mother always holding a rosary, though she once had an affair, and sex outside of marriage was common amongst his relatives. “Sex experiments” are how De Cecco describes the relationships between some of his aunts and uncles.

In private, De Cecco secretly lusted over the rough-and-tumble brawn that defined his blue-collar uncles and their friends. His predilection for the stereotypically masculine image factored into his taste for men later in San Francisco. “I was very active sexually with sailors...they were much more numerous than they are now. It’s a sad thing they closed down the ports,” he laughs, slyly suggesting that younger generations in San Francisco are missing out.

Between all the self-denial and self-exposure, De Cecco has learned that “living with contradictions can expand your mentality.” And his personal struggle to uncover his own sexual identity eventually laid the foundation for his work. “Putting all that together, [realizing he was gay], I made it a career,” he said.

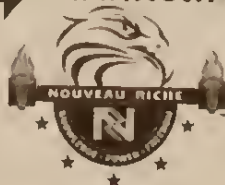
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## GETTING INVOLVED



**Dogpatch Neighborhood Association** usually meets the second Tuesday of each even-numbered month. The next meeting is **August 12** at Sundance Coffee on Third Street at 20th Street from 7 to 9 p.m.

**Potrero Boosters** meets the last Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. (social time begins at 6:30 p.m.) in the wheelchair-accessible Game Room of the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House, 953 DeHaro Street. For more information, visit [www.potreroboosters.org](http://www.potreroboosters.org) or contact President Tony Kelly at 341.8040 or [president@potreroboosters.org](mailto:president@potreroboosters.org). Next meeting: **June 29**, 7 p.m.

**Potrero Hill Association of Merchants & Businesses (PHAMB)** meets the second Tuesday of each month at 10 a.m. at Goat Hill Pizza, corner of Connecticut and 18th streets. Visit [www.potrerohill.biz](http://www.potrerohill.biz) or call 341.8949. Next meeting: **July 8**, 10 a.m.

**Bayview Police Station Captain's Community Meeting** is held on the first Tuesday of each month in the Bayview Police Station Community Room at 201 William Street. Access can be gained by entering through the Newhall Street door. Next meeting: **July 1**, 6 p.m.

**Potrero Hill Democratic Club** meets the First Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House, 953 DeHaro St. For more information, call 648.6740, [www.PHDemClub.org](http://www.PHDemClub.org). Next Meeting: **July 1**.

**Potrero Hill Garden Club** usually meets the last Sunday of the month at 11 a.m. for a potluck lunch in a local home or garden. Discussions are held on subjects related to organic, edible, or ornamental gardening appropriate for Potrero Hill's microclimate. Call 648.6740 for details.



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## Boat Ramp

*Continued from Front Page*

a variety of music, including Otis Redding's ever-appropriate (*Sittin' On*) *The Dock of the Bay*.

Jim Billings, a Bernal Heights resident and four-year Bay View Boat Club member, believes that the ramp and surrounding neighborhood will prove increasingly popular. "More and more people will become aware of what's around down here," said Billings, "it's like a little Shangri-la

in the middle of the city."

The boat clubs' rustic, inviting character and the peaceful solitude of the City's eastern port creates an atmosphere of familiarity and comfort, a perfect place for any boat-lover to launch into the bay. The new ramp offers both novice and frequent boaters a place to practice their hobby, and as Deric Haase, Bay View Boat Club's Port Captain and Flag Officer, observed, "It's a nice step up, and not a moment too soon."

## Starr King

*Continued from Page 14*

trust's liability insurance increased significantly, particularly since the space is not fenced in.

The slice of open space has had its trials and tribulations over the years. An ex-resident occupying the lone DeHaro house alongside the open space tended to park 10 to 13 cars in his easement, which were often towed. His Rottweilers, chained to 40 foot leashes, were even more of an annoyance to nearby residents. Board members took him to a "Vicious and Dangerous" court hearing, and won: Animal Control removed the dogs from his property.

Starr King Open Space is today a calm respite for neighborhood park-goers, with activities scheduled year-round. Earlier this year the Randall Museum taught children about American Indian heritage on the land. High schoolers frequent the lot to plant native flora as part of their

community service, and elementary schools conduct field trips there. Environmentalists take wild flower walks or count bird populations, while countless others stroll through the undeveloped landscape on their way to the Mission or San Francisco General Hospital, or to simply take a breather from urban life.



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– Janet J.





# Police Blotter

**Wednesday, June 18, 7:27 p.m.,** Possession of a Firearm, Arkansas and Madera streets: Officers Mustafich and Solares were patrolling when they spotted a person that they believed was wanted for a crime. They pulled up next to the suspect and asked him his name. The person hesitated, but then gave the officers a false name. As Officer Mustafich got out of the police car the man began to run. The officers gave chase. The suspect tripped and fell to the ground. The officers were able to catch the suspect. In the man's waistband was a loaded .45 caliber handgun. The man, who was on federal probation, was booked for numerous weapons charges and an outstanding warrant issued by the United States Marshall.

**June 19, 12:19 p.m.,** Parolee-at-Large, 800 Block of Arkansas Street: Officers Fowlie and Ferreaz pulled an automobile over for speeding. A computer record showed that the driver was operating the vehicle without a license and was a parolee at large. The driver, a Stockton resident, was booked for the parole warrant and traffic related charges.

**June 15, Shooting into a House,** 1000 block of Connecticut Street: Officers Whitfield and Castro responded to a call regarding a bullet hole in the wall. The officers met with the victim, who stated that early in the morning she heard four gunshots. The victim didn't call the police right away because she was afraid of retaliation. Officers searched the area for any evidence or victims, but found nothing.

**June 12, Aggravated Assault with a Gun,** 17th and Arkansas streets: Numerous Bayview officers responded to the playground regarding a fight involving several persons. Two witnesses told the officers that a group of students from a local school were approached by three males. An argument ensued; one of the males took a handgun from his waistband and smacked one individual on the side of the head. All parties then fled the scene. The witnesses gave the police the name of the suspect and the victim. Another witness believed

that the suspect and victim might be brothers. A check of area hospitals for the victim was negative. The case is under investigation.

**June 8, Conspiracy to Commit Robbery,** 18th and Connecticut streets: Members of Bayview's plainclothes team were driving in Potrero Hill looking for robbery suspects due to the numerous incidents that have recently occurred in the area. Officers saw two suspects matching descriptions of previous perpetrators. The officers detained the suspects and found a firearm in the nearby area, where one of the suspects had placed it. Further investigation revealed that one of the suspects had been involved in a domestic violence incident in another San Francisco neighborhood where he used a gun, which turned out to be the same as the one recovered. The second suspect was also wanted for a parole violation. Both suspects were placed under arrest and transported to Bayview station.

**June 8, Firearm Possession,** Probation Violation, 25th Street: Officer Rodatos responded to the 1800 block of 25th Street regarding a fight. The officer spoke with the victim, who told him that she and her husband were involved in a dispute. Officer Rodatos located the husband, who was on probation, in a back bedroom. The husband had narcotics and narcotic paraphernalia on the bed and appeared to be under the influence of drugs. Rodatos also located a shotgun, in a backpack, inside a crib where the couple's one year old son was asleep. The officer placed the husband under arrest and notified Child Protective Services to investigate.

**June 3, Robbery with a Gun,** Commercial Establishment, Connecticut Street: Officers Dudy and Brown responded to the 200 block of Connecticut regarding two juvenile suspects that had walked into a restaurant with a firearm. Officers spoke with two victims, who worked as janitors, who stated that the suspects robbed them at gunpoint in the kitchen area. The suspects fled on foot and several witnesses came forward with information regarding the incident. No arrest was made.

## Potrero Hill Residents Young, Male and European-American

Race		Gender	
Hispanic/Latino	9.5 percent	Male	54.5 percent
European-American	57.7 percent	Female	45.5 percent
African-American	12.8 percent	Age	
Asian-American	14.9 percent	Median	36.4 years-old
Other	4.7 percent	< 10 years-old	7.2 percent
		10 to 19 years-old	4.9 percent



This Century Plant, which according to legend blooms when it reaches its 100th birthday, and then dies, is currently blooming at the end of Connecticut street. The average lifespan for the plant is actually just a quarter-century. Photo by Rebecca Wilkowski.

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# arts & ENTERTAINMENT

July 2008

## Through July 31

**Photography: You Must Be Mistaken**  
*You Must Be Mistaken* explores stereotypes and what it means to be misunderstood and misrepresented. The exhibit includes traditional black and white prints, digital imagery and alternative processes including cyanotypes and Van Dyke prints. San Francisco Public Library Teen Center, 100 Larkin Street. Information: 512.7109; [www.sfcamerawork.org](http://www.sfcamerawork.org)

## July 3

**Light Show: Baby Boomers F@%\*\$\* Everything**

Join Southern Exposure as they take an epic journey of sigh and sound to explore the Iraqi War's impact on the American psyche. The show is organized by three Los Angeles-based artists whose interests include counter alternative cultures, rhizomatic plants and color praxis. 10 p.m., Southern Exposure, 417 14th Street; 863.2141; [www.soex.org](http://www.soex.org)

## July 4

**Celebration: Farley's firework show**  
 Farley's annual "safe and sane" fireworks show is at it again. The grand display is accompanied by recorded music by John Phillips Souza. Fun for the entire family. Just after dark, Farley's 1315 18th Street; 648.1545

## July 9

**Curbside Lecture: Ask a Scientist**  
 Berkeley astronomer Isabel Hawkins and the Native American Academy's Rose von Thater Braan discuss Native science. Hawkins will talk about Native American astronomy from a western perspective, and von Thater Braan will address how Indigenous learning processes differ from the western scientific method. 7 p.m., Axis Café, 1201 8th Street; 437.2947; <http://www.askascientistSF.com>

## July 11 and 18

**Kids: Iron Science teacher**

Cheer on the competitors in this zany, science cook-off, where teachers compete before a live audience. In a fast-paced atmosphere where showmanship and creativity reign, science teachers are given ten minutes and a secret ingredient to concoct a science activity that can be used in the classroom. As contestant Don Rathjen summed up, "This helps teachers teach the \$10 million state science standards on a \$10 budget." Noon, Exploratorium, 3601 Lyon Street; 563.7337; [www.exploratorium.edu/eclipse/2008](http://www.exploratorium.edu/eclipse/2008)

## July 11 to 12

**Theater: Her Majesty**

San Francisco solo show veterans Sean Owens and Christina Augello return to The EXIT with Owens' *Her Majesty*, a breakneck farce-for-two where queens of every kind collide and quick changes and theatrical follies soon give way to the folly of theatre. \$12 to \$20, sliding scale. 8 p.m. EXIT Stage Left, 156 Eddy Street; 673.3847; [www.theexit.org](http://www.theexit.org).

**Dance: Sean McMahon & Sarah Sass**  
 Peck Peck Dance Ensemble presents Sean McMahon and Sarah Sass. McMahon premieres "blue squares of tape on the floor", which was inspired by music from The Somnambulants. The piece begins with the dancers constructing blue squares of tape on the floor. The rest of the dance happens inside of these squares. Sass' work, titled "Transparent," incorporates plastic bags, electric fans and a pedestrian movement vocabulary. These elements combine to create a visual environment that is concrete, yet constantly in flux onstage. \$18 to \$20, CounterPULSE, 1310 Mission Street; [www.peckpeckdanceensemble.com](http://www.peckpeckdanceensemble.com).

## July 11 to 19

**Theater: A Cloud of Glass**

*A Cloud of Glass* is a premier of exotic sculptural costume and puppetry dance by Sha Sha Higby, and presents a delicate drama of memory and timelessness. Internationally renowned for her evocative and haunting performances, Higby is influenced by her studies in Asia, Noh Theater, Butoh, shadow puppets, and textiles. *SF Weekly* has praised "... her monumental props and costumes are...strung together with silk, wood, leaves and lace slither leisurely across you imagination." Tickets \$18 to \$22. 8 p.m., 2840 Mariposa Street. Information: 868.2409; [www.shashahigby.com](http://www.shashahigby.com)

## July 12

**Spoken Word: Authors Versus Athletics**

Litquake raises its middle finger in a salute that says f\*ck sports. Six authors with a grudge - including Beth Lisick, the Camus-quoting Alan Black and elite gymnast turned author Jennifer Sey - join band Naked Lady Wrestlers and emcee Count Dante for an evening dedicated to celebrating sport in all its glory. Suggested donation \$10. 9 p.m., The Edinburgh Castle. Proceeds go towards staging Litquake 2008.

**Outdoor Events: Laf a Lots Car Show**

Three Parkside hosts their annual car show, with live music. All cars, bikes, car connoisseurs and partiers welcome. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., 1600 17th Street; [www.lafalots.com](http://www.lafalots.com)

## July 12 and 26

**Open Mic: Farley's**

Liz Grant hosts Farley's open mic. Discover new and veteran comics in the City's hopping comedy scene as they try new material at the only open mic in San Francisco held on Saturdays. Newbies warmly welcomed! 7:30, Farley's 1315 18th Street; 648.1545

**Film: Wild and Scenic Film Festival**  
 Featuring flicks from the country's largest environmental film festival. Explore trans-species communication in *The Edge of Eden: Living with Grizzlies*; learn about the 35-year evolution of Greenpeace in *Making a Stand*, and more, including performances and a discussion of the California salmon crisis. \$15 a night/\$25 for both nights. July 18, 6 p.m.; July 19, 4:30 p.m. salmon discussion, 7 p.m. films. Counterpulse, 1310 Mission Street; [www.brownpapertickets.com](http://www.brownpapertickets.com)

## July 13

**Block Party: Sports Basement Fundraiser**

The Sports Basement hosts its first ever, annual, block party, with all proceeds dedicated to helping renovate Franklin Square, located on Bryant and 16th street. Local bands, including High Water, Whiskey Tango and the Groove Robbers will perform hit wonders that everyone can sing and dance along to. Barbecues will be grilling up delicious food, and a beer garden will be flowing like the Iguazu Falls. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., 15th Street between Bryant and Florida; 575-3012; [jkrause@sportsbasement.com](mailto:jkrause@sportsbasement.com).

## July 24 to August 1

**Film: San Francisco Jewish Film Festival**

Celebrate the passionate storytelling, moving images and courageous spirit of independent Jewish cinema at the 28th San Francisco Jewish Film Festival. Films will be screened at the Castro Theater, Roda Theater in Berkeley, CineArts in Palo Alto, and Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center in San Rafael. The festival presents the brightest cinematic gems, offering a full complement of films, festivities, special discussion programs and international guests. 925.275.9490; [www.sfjff.org](http://www.sfjff.org)

## July 26

**Film Festival: The Breakfast Club**

"Film Night in the Park" presents *The Breakfast Club* at Dolores Park. Summer Film Night in the Park draws more than 15,000 filmgoers to San Francisco parks. Films are presented free of charge on a giant outdoor screen. Attendees are encouraged to picnic before screenings and discouraged from blocking views with chairs. All screenings begin at dusk. 465.FILM; [www.sfneighborhoodtheater.org](http://www.sfneighborhoodtheater.org)

**Legal Help: Providence Baptist Church**

If you have legal problems, or need to talk to a lawyer, visit the legal advice and referral clinic to receive referrals to agencies and get help filling out forms. The volunteer attorneys specialize in landlord/tenant issues, family law, domestic violence, employment, persona injury, contracts and other.

Chinese and Spanish interpreters may be available. You must register between 12 and 1:30 p.m., 1601 McKinnon Avenue; 989.1616

## July 27

**Theater: San Francisco Theater Festival**

The Bay Area's amazing and unique one-day live theater extravaganza showcases 85 theater groups and solo artists on 11 stages. Shakespeare, comedy, drama, musical theater, children's shows, improv., and more. It's fun; it's festive; more than 20 theater companies are participating. Free, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Yerba Buena Arts Complex, Mission and 3rd Street; 543.1718; [www.sftheaterfestival.org](http://www.sftheaterfestival.org)

## July 31 - August 1

**Kids: Total Solar Eclipse 2008**

Exploratorium brings its fifth eclipse expedition team to remote Xinjiang Province in Northwestern China, close to the Mongolian border, where a total solar eclipse will be web cast live to the world. From this remote desert on the ancient Silk Route, four cutting-edge telescopes will point skywards to capture the eclipse from beginning to end -- in white light, hydrogen alpha (for amazing details), and Calcium-K (to see surface structure). Pack your sleeping bag and camp out on the museum floor for an overnight eclipse party. This event will capture and actively observe the full eclipse, and investigate space weather and the sun as a power source. 9 p.m. to 3:30 a.m., Exploratorium, 3601 Lyon Street; 563.7337; [www.exploratorium.edu/eclipse/2008](http://www.exploratorium.edu/eclipse/2008)

## August 1 and 2

**Choral Concert: War Requiem**

The San Francisco Choral Society, under the artistic direction of Robert Geary, will perform Benjamin Britten's powerful *War Requiem*, at Davies Symphony Hall. This is the second time in the Society's 19-year history that this work will has been performed, since it calls for a full orchestra, chamber orchestra, mixed chorus, and children's chorus. \$24 to \$30, Davies Symphony Hall, Grove Street and Van Ness; 392.4400

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## Potrero Mom

Continued from Front Page



Brian Ferguson, Natalie Freeburg, and their daughter Isla. Photo courtesy of Natalie Freeburg.

educational equity and "social justice for families."

When Freeburg entered college at Southern Methodist University in Dallas it was her first time living in the states; the result was culture shock. "I didn't fit in at all," she said quietly. "Because I had lived abroad, I missed out on all the American TV shows that define pop culture and bind people together." Freeburg found comfort as president of Mobilization of Volunteer Efforts, which gave students an opportunity to become involved in the community outside campus. "We grew the organization from about 10 students to over 100 by the time I graduated.

"People don't have any idea how hungry others are to be a part of community," Freeburg explained. "Many years ago, when I moved into an apartment building with five other flats, I stuck a note under each door inviting people over for a pot of chili. Someone said they had lived there for eight years and no one had ever

done that."

When Freeburg began dating Scotland-born Brian Ferguson, whom she married at the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House seven years ago, "We did a lot of volunteer projects like Habitat for Humanity. Now that we're life partners, every year on Valentine's Day, we cook and serve dinner at a shelter for men who are homeless." Freeburg admitted, "To be honest, I really struggled at first with Brian's desire to not participate in the commercial aspect of Valentine's Day, but now I feel much more enriched giving away boxes of chocolates than receiving them."

Freeburg and Ferguson prefer the term "partner" to "husband and wife." According to brown-haired, blue-eyed Freeburg, "We started referring to each other as 'partner' in solidarity with friends who were committed same-sex couples. And until the day when LGBT people have marriage equality, we'll keep saying it. Another reason we choose to use the word 'partner' is it helps us create our own parenting roles rather than rely on society's definitions. We share our child-rearing 50-50," she said.

When the couple first met, Ferguson commuted to a Silicon Valley job. But his interest in Unitarian Universalism led him to enroll in the Starr King School for Ministry at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. After their daughter Isla – Scottish for 'island,' who's now five years old – was born, Freeburg began volunteering at the First Unitarian Universalist Church

of San Francisco (UUSF) on Franklin Street, working with children. She was quickly offered the job of acting director of religious education.

Roughly one month before Isla arrived, Freeburg placed an ad in the *View* to find other new and prospective parents-to-be. "It was difficult at first, because I don't have extended family here and neither does Brian. I had no friends with children, I didn't have a mom, auntie, or grandmother nearby to give advice on things such as breast feeding, diapers, or to reassure you that 'your child's not dying, it's just gas...'"

According to Freeburg, her family-focused community building "started with just a few of us meeting at Farley's. We didn't want to have a group just for moms, for which there are many, but for couples, both partners and two-dad families. Freeburg created a Yahoo group, which helped speed things up. "With technology, we didn't need a newsletter, or phone trees. It was instant." The strategy worked. The informal group graduated to meeting monthly at Bloom's Saloon; parents brought their newborns in car seats and strollers. A babysitting exchange was set up; spin-offs were formed. The group grew so fast and became so large that they decided to merge with the more established PHPA, which had been around for nearly 20 years. While PHPA had a long track record of family-oriented community building, including helping to renovate McKinley Square Park, it had shrank to about 40 members at the time and was going through a transition period.

"For me personally, there was loss around becoming parents, spontaneity, the ability to participate in the San Francisco I loved...I could frolic no more," Freeburg said. "PHPA was a chance to recreate why I live here. It helps people get to know each other face to face, have events, a safe place to express opinions, create a bridge and share struggle."

Most importantly, said Freeburg, "The group is empowering. It gives reasons for parents to stay in Potrero Hill; for the education of their children, for example, rather than fleeing to the suburbs, where schools, parks and public transportation are supposedly better." A rejuvenated PHPA supported the creation of the Mandarin immersion program at then ailing Starr King Elementary School,

and inspired a group of parents to fight to keep Daniel Webster Elementary School open. According to Elaine Wang, a First 5 program officer, "Natalie is amazing. I admire her so much. Because she took the initiative, she mobilized parents, got them support they needed to engage and organize."

On behalf of PHPA, Freeburg obtained a three-year, \$11,000, First 5 Parent Action Grant from the state. "It was really great...we didn't have to front money for our web group, or have to charge \$15 for an art activity class, for example, which some parents can't afford," said Freeburg. "One of the most valuable things about it was attending the trainings, where we could interact with other parents, exchange laughter and struggles about community building, no matter our economic and cultural differences." Grant funded activities included monthly art events at St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Church, as well as classes in drumming, toilet training, CPR, and child raising. "We also had community events such as 'Raise, Raze & Recycle,' our version of toddler Burning Man last year, and were able to support local organizations by paying rental fees for our events," Freeburg added.

"I'm a big believer in supporting local businesses; it really does help community building, because you meet people while shopping in your local grocery store, café or restaurant, in addition to the fact that it keeps neighborhood businesses going. Otherwise, people just stay in their houses, you never run into them."

After juggling full-time employment and seminary studies for two years, Ferguson recently quit his job, and Freeburg resigned her position with UUSF last summer. This month the family will move to Austin, Texas, where Ferguson will intern at a Unitarian Universalist church. "Brian will complete his ministerial degree as the intern for First Unitarian Universalist Church, Isla will begin kindergarten, and I have no idea what job I'll have. We don't even really know anyone there...yet," Freeburg said with a smile. Freeburg and her family plan to return home to San Francisco in a year.

If you're a Potrero Hill parent and would like to join PHPA, contact Sara O'Neill [skmoneill@gmail.com](mailto:skmoneill@gmail.com).



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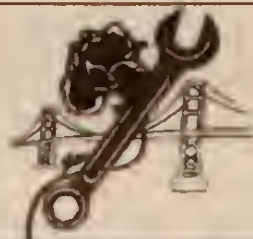
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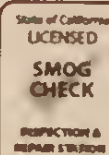
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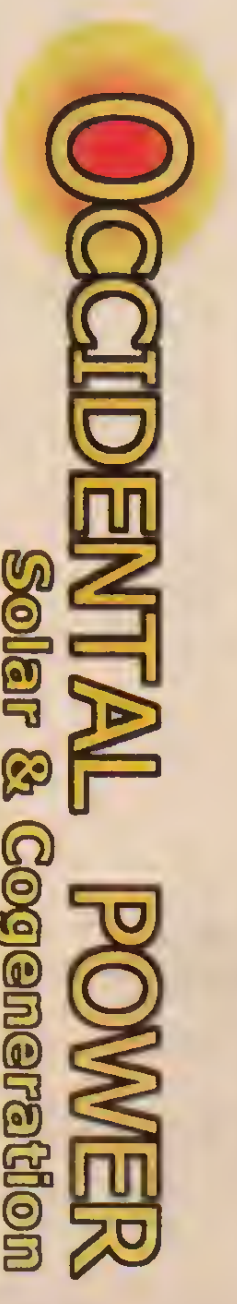
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